



Senator Sheila Kuehl

23rd District
Newsletter
July 2005

Paid Family Leave in California: One Year Later

Workers Laud Paid Time Off to Spend With Ill Family Members, Newborns

Statistics released on July 1, 2005 showed that more than 137,000 workers took advantage of California's Paid Family Leave program during the first year. The law, the first in the nation, provides relief for workers who cannot afford to take time off from work without pay to bond with a newborn, adopted or foster child or to care for a seriously ill family member.

"The right to leave is meaningless if a worker can't afford it," said Senator Kuehl, author of the Paid Family Leave law. "No one wins when a worker is forced to choose between a pay-check and caring for a seriously ill family member. That's why access to the Paid Family Leave insurance program, paid for exclusively by employees, is so critical to California workers, their families and our economy."

"My time off with my babies was amazing," said Lorna Richardson Evans, who took paid leave to bond with her triplets. "I took the time off after they came home from

the hospital. I would have had to quit my job because my babies needed me. Paid leave gave me the opportunity to keep my job and be with my children. I was able to take care of them because they were so small and so premature. They needed me."



Rob Reiner, Chair of First 5 California, a state commission dedicated to improving the lives of children ages 0 to 5, was pleased to note that 17 percent of parents applying for bonding time were fathers. "Study after study tells us that the parent-child bond during the first few months of life is vital to a child's healthy development," said Reiner. "It's good to see fathers taking advantage

of this opportunity."

The Paid Family Leave Law, authored by Senator Sheila Kuehl, is funded entirely by workers through contributions to California's State Disability Insurance program. It allows employees to collect up to 55 percent of their salary for up to six weeks, up to a maximum of \$840 per

Paid Leave, continued on page 2.

Senator Sheila J. Kuehl 23rd Senate District

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IN • THIS • ISSUE

- 3 Kuehl Legislation Protects At-Risk Families
- 3 A Fond Farewell to Cindy Miscikowski
- 4 Park Agencies Start Shuttle Linking Scenic Areas
- 5 Oxnard Youth Program Pays Off
- 5 The Challenge of Adequate Clean-up at Rocketdyne
- 6 Senator Kuehl Receives Mathew O. Trobiner Award
- 7 Kuehl Staffer Selected for Water Leaders Program

week, while caring for their loved ones. According to EDD, close to \$300 million in benefits were paid to workers in the program's first year, which was actually less than originally projected.

"The program has had a critical impact on working families who have eldercare responsibilities—and it represents a good beginning," said Kathleen Kelly, Executive Director of Family Caregiver Alliance/National Center on Caregiving. "As awareness of the benefits of paid family leave increases, so will usage among Californians who are so often caught in the middle between work and family demands."

Kim Kruckel, Education Coordinator for the Paid Family Leave Coalition, agreed. "Part of our challenge is to reach out to and educate communities who have not yet learned they're entitled to these benefits." To that

end, the Coalition conducts workshops and outreach to ensure Paid Family Leave fulfills its potential to help improve the health of California's families.

"My mother suffers from dementia," said Cheryl Stewart, a beneficiary of California's Paid Family Leave Law. "Her condition is not serious enough to require skilled nursing care, but she has to have someone with her at all times. That's when I turned to Paid Family Leave. I was able to get paid while taking two days off each week for six months, and spend those days taking care of my mother."

California's landmark law is serving as a model for other states around the country. Currently, 21 states are considering some form of paid family leave legislation. A federal version was introduced on June 30, 2005 by Representative Pete Stark (D-CA), which would institute a nationwide system for paid family leave.

With Paid Family Leave You Can Afford to Be There When You Need to Be

There are times in the life of every working person when they need to care for a loved one. Maybe it's a working mother who needs more time to bond with and care for a newborn. Maybe it's an employee who needs to care for a parent, child, spouse, or domestic partner who is seriously ill. California's new Paid Family Leave law was created for times like these.

Paid Family Leave for California Employees

Paid Family Leave insurance benefits are based on past quarterly earnings and range from a minimum of \$50 to a maximum of \$728 per week for up to six weeks for claims beginning July 1, 2004. For claims commencing in 2005, the maximum weekly benefit amount will be \$840.

Paid Family Leave insurance does not provide job protection or return rights. Your job **may** be protected **if** your employer is subject to the federal Family Medical Leave Act and the California Family Rights Act. You must notify your employer of your reason for taking leave in a manner consistent with your company's leave policy.

To qualify for Paid Family Leave compensation, you must meet the following requirements:

- Be covered by State Disability Insurance (SDI) (or a voluntary plan in lieu of SDI) and have earned at least \$300 from which deductions were withheld
- Complete your claim forms accurately, completely, truthfully, and timely
- Supply medical information that supports your claim that the care recipient is in need of your care
- Provide documentation to support a claim for bonding with a new child
- Use up to two weeks of any earned but unused vacation leave first if required by your employer
- Serve a 7-day unpaid waiting period before benefits begin

You may not be eligible for benefits if:

- You receive State Disability Insurance, Unemployment Compensation Insurance, or Workers' Compensation
- You are not working or looking for work at the time you begin your family leave
- You are not suffering a loss of wages
- The need for care is not supported by the certificate of a treating physician or practitioner
- You are in custody due to conviction of a crime

You are entitled to:

- Know the reason and basis for any decision that affects your benefits
- Appeal any decision about your eligibility for benefits and appear before a California Unemployment Insurance Appeal Board administrative law judge
- Privacy — Information about your claim will be kept confidential except for the purposes allowed by law

A Special Law for Special Times

With Paid Family Leave insurance, California is leading the nation as the first state to make it easier for employees to balance workplace demands and family care needs. If you have any questions or think you are in need and are eligible for these benefits, contact us today.

1-877-BE-THERE (English)
1-877-379-3819 (Español)
1-800-563-2441 (TTY)
P.O. Box 997017
Sacramento, CA 95799-7017
www.edd.ca.gov/eddmail.htm

Kuehl Legislation Protects At-Risk Families

By Anne Neville and Jennifer Richard

Throughout her career, Senator Kuehl has worked to protect at-risk families. In January of this year she introduced SB 493 and SB 500, both of which provide additional opportunities for teen parents and their children.

SB 493 provides 3 months of transitional aid to teen parents, in order to allow them to stabilize their living and learning situations so that they can complete their high school education under California's Cal-Learn program. "Pregnant and parenting teens are among the most vulnerable youth in California. In fact, 70% of teen mothers will never complete high school. I authored SB 493 because it helps teen parents to succeed. This bill ensures that teen parents who wish to finish high school through the Cal-Learn program are provided with the resources to do so," Kuehl said.

SB 500 allows the state to receive additional federal funding for teen parents and their children who are in the foster care system, without requiring that the child of

the teen parent also become a ward of the state. The bill creates a new foster care licensing category to help create family-like placements for teens and their children and requires that teen parents and their foster care families develop a shared responsibility plan in order to prevent conflicts and misunderstandings regarding care of the infant. "Finding ways to better serve teen parents and their children helps our whole society," says Senator Kuehl. "Fewer babies will be placed in foster care away from their parents and fewer abused and neglected teens will find themselves facing yet another loss and tragedy."

If you have ideas that will help improve the lives of at-risk families in California, or if you have ideas for other bills, please send an email to Senator Kuehl at Sheila.Kuehl@sen.ca.gov. Senator Kuehl and her staff will review and research each proposal in order to determine whether to introduce a new bill next year.

Anne Neville is Legislative Aide and Jennifer Richard is Legislative Director in Senator Kuehl's Capitol Office.

A Fond Farewell to Cindy Miscikowski

By Laura Plotkin

Councilmember Cindy Miscikowski is leaving public office (for now) after serving as a public servant in the City of Los Angeles for over 30 years. Acting as an aide to the 11th District's Councilmember Marvin Braude for over 20 years, Ms. Miscikowski was subsequently elected to his council seat in 1997, after he retired, and she has represented parts of the San Fernando Valley and the coastal area of Los Angeles ever since. Over the years, her focus has been on quality of life issues affecting neighborhoods as well as the many public policy issues of the greater region.

She used her expertise in land-use planning (she is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners) by developing many planning strategies now widely used in Los Angeles, such as slope-density requirements to preserve hillside open space. She authored Proposition U in 1986 which cut in half the permitted density of most of the

commercial zones in Los Angeles, and Proposition O in 1988 which banned oil exploration and drilling on the city's beaches.



In addition, she joined county, state and federal park agency partners in arranging for the preservation of thousands of acres of open space in the Santa Monica Mountains for future generations of park users. Our District Office staff has had the pleasure of working with her and her staff on transportation, veterans and public safety issues as well. As chair of the council's Public Safety Committee, she led efforts to expand community policing and strengthen civilian oversight while streamlining the recruiting and hiring process for the police department. For now, she is contemplating taking a rest for a while—the only job she is inexperienced to perform. We wish her and her staff the

best and look forward to working with her successor, Councilmember, Bill Rosendahl, in the future.

Laura Plotkin is Senator Kuehl's District Director.

Park Agencies Start Shuttle Linking Scenic Areas in the 23rd Senate District

By Laurie Newman

Under the leadership of, and with funding from, the National Park Service, a new shuttle service, ParkLINK, will be available to visitors to the Santa Monica Mountains and the coast from Malibu Lagoon State Beach to Zuma Beach Recreation Area. ParkLINK Shuttle, a partnership of the National Park Service, California State Parks, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and LA County Beaches and Harbors, had its kick-off on July 2, 2005.

The shuttle travels between PCH and Mulholland Highway, crossing the mountains via Kanan Dume and Malibu Canyon Roads. Parking is available at all of the nine shuttle stops: Malibu Creek State Park, Tapia Park, Malibu Lagoon State Beach, Corral

Canyon, Solstice Canyon, Zuma Beach County Park, Peter Strauss Ranch, Paramount Ranch and the Backbone Trailheads on Kanan Dume and Malibu Canyon. A trip along the entire route takes about 2 hours. Bus stops have passenger shelters, benches and signs.

The introductory fare for the duration of 2005 is \$1.00. Children under 5 ride free. In 2006, the regular shuttle fare will be \$5.00 for an all day pass. The shuttle is free to LA area bus riders who have a Metro Day Pass. Currently, the shuttle is set to run from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm on weekends and holidays but during the summer months the shuttle will run later in the day, until approximately 8:00 pm.

The service will allow visitors to the area to arrive at any of the nine shuttle stops and be transported to any of the other locations. ParkLINK will provide visitors who are dependent on public transit an opportunity to visit and explore the region, perhaps for the first time. There are a few stops along the route that are also stops for the Metro Bus. The program is a win-win for air quality and the environment, as not only will car trips be cut down within the area but the shuttles are also powered by clean diesel fuel.



The Santa Monica National Recreation Area is a beautiful area, completely located in the 23rd State Senate District. I hope that the shuttle will attract new visitors to the area, and encourage those of us who would rather get out of our cars, a new way to do just that. There are many opportunities for outdoor adventures in the Santa Monica Mountains and along the

coast. I'm planning my outing right now: what to make for the picnic, which of the beautiful spots to visit, when to go. Think about doing the same. The mountains are spectacular, the hiking invigorating and scenic, and once you get there, you can take advantage of an outing away from the hustle and bustle of the City. Hope to see you there.

For more information check out the website www.parklinkshuttle.com or call (888) 734-2323.

Laurie Newman is Senior Field Deputy in Senator Kuehl's District Office.

The 23rd Senate District includes the cities of Agoura Hills, Beverly Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Malibu, Oxnard, Santa Monica, West Hollywood and Westlake Village and the communities of Bel Air, Brentwood, Canoga Park, Encino, Hollywood, Mt. Olympus, Port Hueneme, Pacific Palisades, Sherman Oaks, Studio City, Tarzana, Topanga, West Los Angeles, West Hills, Westwood and Woodland Hills.



Oxnard Youth Program Pays Off

By Hilda Garcia

On June 8th in Oxnard, California, a unique non-profit organization called Keys to Empower You in the System Academy (KEYS) graduated 40 at-risk youth. This program is designed to build and bring leadership, organizing and empowerment skills to at-risk youth and their families in the community of Oxnard. The central core of the curriculum is to empower the youth by a multi-disciplined approach to problem-solving and community activism.

KEYS is a 15-week college preparatory module that meets after school three days a week. The 15 week program provides instruction to prepare the students for GED and community college admission requirements, as well as, career development, software skills training, adult mentoring support, on-going testing and assessment, and bi-weekly stipends for students who attend three days a week. If one class is missed, the stipend is reduced.

Since 2001, the KEYS program has enrolled 116 youth who were being adjudicated in the juvenile justice sys-

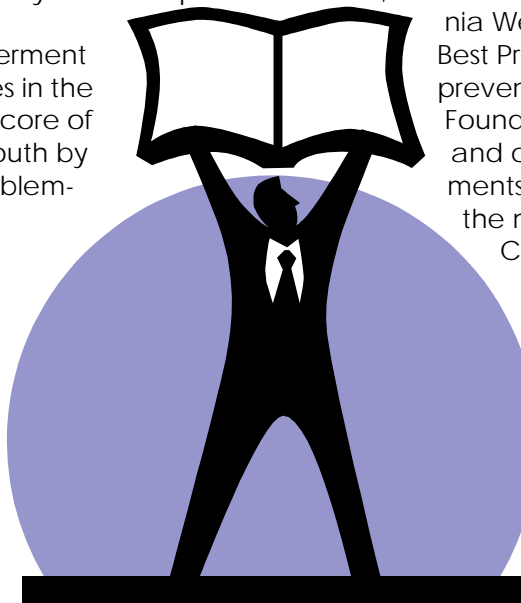
tem. Of this number, 79% went on to enroll in college and 82% improved basic skills by at least one grade level.

In 2004, the foundation was recognized by The California Wellness Foundation as one of the 19 Best Programs in the State of California for preventing youth violence. In addition, the Foundation has received numerous awards and citations from local and state governments for creating a unique alternative for the most at-risk youth in the Ventura County area. KEYS has also received recognition for its creative, grass-roots approaches to empowering the community in such areas as farmworker rights, voter registration, civil rights organizing and youth awareness and empowerment activities.

Congratulations to the graduating class of 2005. Your courage, hard work and commitment have paid

off! Always believe in yourself and never give up. Anything is possible!

Hilda Garcia is a Field Deputy in Senator Kuehl's District Office.



The Challenge of Adequate Clean-up at Rocketdyne

By Laura Plotkin

The Department of Energy (DOE) held a meeting in Simi Valley on June 22nd to address the progress of its clean-up and the discovery of elevated levels of tritium, found in several water wells located on the former Rocketdyne, now Boeing, site. Tritium is a radioactive form of hydrogen which is produced in nuclear facilities and high-energy accelerators. Since the site was the location for nuclear reactor operations for about 35 years, starting in the 1950s, the members of the community present had a number of pressing questions about the significance of the findings. Continued testing will be done to learn more about the extent of this on-site contamination and what the potential ramifications of this discovery might be.

On a related note, Senator Kuehl recently wrote to the National Academy of Sciences, which is conducting a study to assess human health risks associated with tri-

chloroethylene (TCE), another contaminant also found on the Rocketdyne/Boeing site. In her letter, she expressed concern that, "TCE is an extremely volatile compound, not only affecting water resources but also potentially moving from the subsurface into buildings, changing form from a liquid to a gas. TCE traveling in this airborne manner could pose a threat to human health through its presence in the ambient air within the district."

The Senator added that she hoped that the committee will fulfill its task to "examine the science and make a determination based upon biology without regard to political or financial considerations," noting that the sponsors of the study—the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration—are the very agencies which are responsible for TCE pollution at the site.

Laura Plotkin is Senator Kuehl's District Director.

Senator Kuehl Receives Mathew O. Tobriner Public Service Award from the Legal Aid Society – Employment Law Center

By Jennifer Richard

The Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center (LAS-ELC) presented Senator Kuehl with the Mathew O. Tobriner Public Service award at its 89th Anniversary Luncheon on July 7, 2005, at the San Francisco Marriott. This event featured keynote speaker Barney Frank, U.S. Congressman, who has represented the Fourth District of Massachusetts for 24 years. Congressman Frank, the first openly gay member of Congress, is widely known for his outspokenness and eloquence on many of the key civil rights issues of our time. Chosen to help the LAS-ELC celebrate the luncheon's theme, "We Are Family: Into a New Era for Civil Rights and Working Families," Congressman Frank spoke to the country's growing diversity and the pressing needs of working families.

The Mathew O. Tobriner Public Service Award was presented to California State Senator Sheila Kuehl in recognition of her work on the California Paid Family Leave Act and her longtime advocacy on behalf of communities, including working families, victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, and disabled workers.

Mathew O. Tobriner was one of the founders of the Legal Aid Society. As a lawyer, his practice was devoted to improving the lot of working people, and as a judge on the Court of Appeal, and later on the California Supreme Court, he became justly famous for his persuasive and ground-breaking opinions broadening standards of protection for security and justice in the workplace.

"We are honored that Congressman Frank and Senator Kuehl were our special guests at our luncheon," says Joan Messing Graff, President of the LAS-ELC, "They have carried the banner of justice, fairness, and dignity throughout their careers and have made notable differences in the lives of those who struggle under the weight of bias and poverty." The luncheon also honored the students, the parents, and the attorney team of a victorious class action in 2004 that has set a national standard in integrating disabled students into San Francisco's public schools.

Jennifer Richard is Senator Kuehl's Legislative Director.



INFORMATIONAL MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT Change in Haskell Avenue Off-Ramp Access

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) will hold an Informational Meeting on **Wednesday, July 20, 2005** to brief community members about an upcoming change in access to the westbound Ventura Freeway (US-101) Haskell Avenue off-ramp.

Due to safety issues, access to the ramp from the northbound San Diego Freeway (I-405) connector to westbound US-101 will be closed permanently by mid-summer, 2005. Motorists can exit the next ramp on US-101, which is Hayvenhurst Avenue.

The meeting will be held from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Sherman Oaks Galleria (Community Room), 15303 Ventura Boulevard, Sherman Oaks, CA 91403.

Individuals who require special accommodation (American Sign Language interpreter, accessible seating, documentation in alternate formats, etc.) are requested to contact Caltrans at least three days prior to the scheduled meeting date. TDD users may contact the California Relay Service line at 1-800-735-2929 or Voice Line at 1-800-735-2922.

For more information: Contact Caltrans Public Affairs at (213) 897-3656

Kuehl Staffer Selected for Water Leaders Program

Tam Ma, who is on Senator Kuehl's policy staff, was one of sixteen individuals selected to be a part of the William R. Gianelli Water Leaders Class, a program of the Water Education Foundation. Water Leaders is a one-year program that identifies young community leaders from diverse backgrounds, including members of minority and ethnic communities, and educates them about water issues. The program enhances individual leadership skills and prepares participants to take an active, cooperative approach to decision-making about water resource issues. Leading stakeholders and top policy-makers serve as mentors to class members. Lester Snow, Director of the California Department of Water Resources, is Tam's mentor.

Each year, the Water Leaders class researches a different water-related issue. This year's class is looking at the Endangered Species Act and its intersection with water resource issues. Water Leaders are also required to participate in Water Education Foundation tours which offer participants a firsthand look at the water facilities, rivers and regions critical in the debate about the future of water resources in California and the West.

Tam went on a three-day tour of the Lower Colorado River in April. The tour followed the course of the lower Colorado River through Nevada, Arizona and California, and included a private tour of Hoover Dam, a boat ride on Lake Mead, a stop at the Yuma Desalting Plant, a visit to the Salton Sea, tours of Metropolitan Water District of Southern California facilities at Gene Village, and visits to southern California agricultural and urban regions. Issues discussed include the Colorado River drought, the California 4.4 plan, Central Arizona Project, southern Nevada's water needs, water conservation and transfer agreements, restoration of the Salton Sea, endangered species, tribal water rights and water quality.

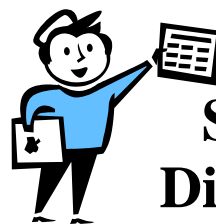
In June, Tam had the opportunity to learn about the San Francisco – San Joaquin Bay-Delta, which is the heart of the State Water Project and Central Valley Project. The three-day Bay-Delta tour traveled through the Delta and San Francisco Bay region, with visits to Delta farms, the Delta Cross Channel, the Tracy Pumping Plant, the Bay-Delta model in Sausalito, Los Vaqueros Reservoir and Suisun Marsh. Issues discussed include water project operations, fish passage, endangered species, ecosystem restoration, levees and flood management, Delta agriculture, drinking water quality and water supply reliability.



2005 Water Leaders on the Bay-Delta Tour. Tam Ma, Senator Kuehl's staffer, is fourth from the left. Photo courtesy of Water Education Foundation.

William R. "Bill" Gianelli, for whom the program is named, served as Assistant Secretary for the Army in charge of the Corps of Engineers from 1981 to 1984 and Director of the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) from 1967 to 1973 during major construction on the State Water Project. He began his career with DWR in 1946 and continues as a Consulting Civil Engineer. He is past president of the Water Education Foundation. He resides in Monterey, California and is a big supporter of the Water Leaders Program.

To learn more about the Water Leaders Program and the Water Education Foundation, visit:
<http://www.water-ed.org>



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